

# State of Connecticut

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## PERMANENT COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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**Written Testimony of  
Susan O. Storey, Esq.  
Chairperson  
Permanent Commission on the Status of Women  
Before the  
Appropriations Committee  
Tuesday, February 16, 2006**

**Re: The FY 2007 Budget for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women  
in H.B. 5007, An Act Making Adjustments to the Budget for the Biennium Ending  
June 30, 2007**

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony regarding the proposed FY 2007 budget for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. We respectfully ask you to support the budget proposal for our agency contained in the Governor's budget document. We seek no changes.

PCSW has been bringing the voices of women to the State Capitol for over thirty years, and through all of that time, we have been at the forefront of continuing progress for women in our state. Our job is to provide information, analysis, and assistance to the General Assembly, state agencies, state leaders, and the public so that we can all work together to improve the status of Connecticut's women and girls. We represent a small investment that produces a sizeable and valuable return. Because of the work of the PCSW, our state government has been better equipped to address the needs of working parents, victims of sexual harassment, women with health care concerns such as breast cancer and osteoporosis, women business owners, parents seeking child support, women

leaving welfare for work, childcare workers, and women entering nontraditional occupations.

This year, we are particularly proud of the work we have done to highlight the problem of human trafficking. As a member and also the staff to the Interagency Task Force on Human Trafficking, chaired by Sen. Stillman, we offered research, writing and leadership. The Task Force issued its report in January and legislation has been proposed this session to define trafficking in our state criminal statutes and to enhance training and services to victims.

We also worked closely this past year with the Office of Workforce Competitiveness on two projects: We co-chaired the Career Ladders Advisory Council and oversaw the allocation of \$500,000 for pilot projects to enhance education and career opportunities for workers in the childcare and health care fields. We also assisted the OWC in publishing the updated Self-Sufficiency Standard for Connecticut to help job-seekers and policy-makers have essential data about the real costs of meeting basic needs in our state.

Many of our responsibilities are on-going. For example, we are mandated by statute to collaborate with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities to provide training on an annual basis to all state agency affirmative action officers. Also, pursuant to a stipulated agreement, we continue to work with the Department of Correction to reduce sexual harassment against employees. Under the agreement, the PCSW has hired former superior court judge, Beverly Hodgson, to serve as Sexual Harassment Consultant to monitor all investigations and resolutions of sexual harassment and retaliation claims, and to assist the Department in improving its policies and procedures. The PCSW also co-chairs a Sexual Harassment Working Group, and assists the DOC in training its employees.

We believe our budget represents the type of state spending that saves money in the long run. For example, in addition working with the Department of Correction, the PCSW has provided Sexual Harassment Prevention Training to 5,000 state employees over five years, in agencies such as the Department of Information Technology, Banking Department, the CT State University System Central Office, the Department of Revenue Services, the Department of Correction, the Office of the Attorney General, and Legislative Management. **PCSW charges no fee to these agencies.** Without the training services provided by the PCSW, these agencies would have had to pay between \$400 and \$600 for each two-hour training session, required by law for all supervisors

The PCSW also designs and participates in programs that directly help women and girls improve their lives. Last week, we began another pre-apprenticeship training class for fifteen women who will graduate and enter paid apprenticeships in the skilled trades or other new fields. Their lives will change in measurable ways as a result of their participation in this program, because they will have the opportunity to earn more money, receive better benefits, and create brighter futures for themselves and their families. The Connecticut Department of Labor and the Hartford Jobs Funnel, under the auspices of Capital Workforce Partners, fund this program. Every year, too, the PCSW works with

other partner organizations to provide programs for girls, such as *Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day* and the *Girls and Technology Expo*, to help them develop skills, self-esteem, and new career aspirations.

We provide information and services to the public, as well. We respond to approximately 400 calls per year from individuals seeking information about state laws and services, and in 2004/2005, staff and Commissioners spoke at thirty seven events sponsored by groups ranging from the League of Women voters, to the Connecticut chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners, to students at our vocational high schools. Our website was visited approximately 43,000 times during the year.

Our statutory mandate requires us, among other duties, to “...serve as a liaison between government and private interest groups concerned with services for women...” C.G.S. Sec. 46a-4(b), and we often think of ourselves as a gateway for the concerns of different populations of women across the state. To help our constituencies to bring their issues to the attention of state government, the PCSW convenes five *Congressional District Advisory Councils* composed of more than 200 women and men who serve in leadership roles around the state; the *Connecticut Women’s Health Campaign*, a statewide coalition of experts and advocates working together to improve healthcare for women and girls; and the *Nontraditional Employment for Women Steering Committee*, to increase opportunities for women in the skilled trades and technical careers.

Connecticut statute also requires us to “promote consideration of qualified women for all levels of government...” To that end, we maintain a “Talent Bank” of women interested in serving on state boards and commissions. In 2005, there were over 400 women listed in our Talent Bank; seven women from this list were appointed to serve in state government.

We have made a great deal of progress in Connecticut, but women and girls are not fully equal yet, and there is still much work to be done. While Connecticut ranks first in the nation in individual earnings, we rank 43<sup>rd</sup> in terms of the wage gap between women and men. Women and girls are still victims of domestic violence and sexual assault; childcare workers are still paid far less than truck drivers; and women are still far more likely than men to be poor as they grow old.

At the PCSW, we are working for all of our children and grandchildren, so they can grow up in a world where full social, political, and economic equality is possible for everyone. We bring you the voices, the stories, the information, and the analysis that assist you in your efforts to build that world. Our budget represents a small investment to achieve an important and valuable goal. Thank you.